

United States Branch Mint (Old Mint)
Fifth and Mission Streets
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HABS No. CAL-160
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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PHOTOGRAPH - DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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UNITED STATES BRANCH MINT (2nd)

ADDRESS Fifth and Mission Streets, San Francisco,
California

OWNER United States Government

OCCUPANT United States Government

USE Office Space

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The San Francisco Mint was, until the passage of the Coinage Act of 1873, but a branch of the parent establishment at Philadelphia. By this Act it was placed on an independent basis. It had however, attained greater importance than the Philadelphia Mint previous to this, and took the rank of the foremost in the United States due to its location as the central depot of all the gold and silver products of the Pacific Coast.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Physical History The San Francisco Second U.S. Mint was begun in 1869 under the auspices of the Architects of the Treasury in Washington D. C., and was finished in 1874. The cornerstone (containing a copper casket of coins, newspapers, photographs and other mementos of the occasion) was laid on May 26, 1870.

The Mint was designed by A. B. Mullett, who also produced the Old State Building and the War and Navy Building in Washington, D. C. Since the building of a new Mint in 1937, it has not functioned as a Mint, but has been used for offices for various Federal Government Departments or Agencies.

Historical Events The San Francisco Mint in 1934 housed one-third of the nation's gold reserve, and survived the 1906 earthquake and fire aided by its iron shutters and

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Mint employees and soldiers who battled seven hours with a one-inch hose to protect the \$200,000,000 stored in the vaults. In addition to its worth as a civic monument, the Mint is a valuable historic record of the end concept of Federal architecture conceived by our only architect president, Jefferson, and executed by LaTrobe, Mills and Mullett, various Federal buildings.

Supplemental Materials

U. S. Census Office, House Misc. 2nd Session, 47th Congress
1882-3, Washington D. C. 1885

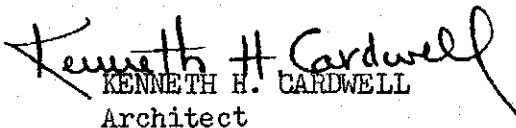
B. E. Lloyd, Lights and Shadows of San Francisco
San Francisco 1876

Paper by Stephen Jacobs, Society of Architectural Historians
Regional Meeting, Eugene, Oregon 1958

HAB Inventory dated January 15, 1958

Approved by

Prepared by


KENNETH H. CARDWELL
Architect

August 1958

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

General The building is a rectangular structure with a narrow internal court, with four corner pavilions and a Doric hexastyle portico. The pavilions, with slightly raking parapets, are given emphasis by flat pilasters under a Doric frieze. It is two full stories in height with a lofty basement which places the main floor some 12 feet above street level. This is a powerful effect of contrast between

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the block corner elements and the pair of square brick chimneys 130 feet high that rise in the rear and were used in connection with the refining of ore. The building is, in general, in a good state of repair except for the cornice which has deteriorated and has been partially removed allowing moisture to cause spalling of some of the face stone.

Exterior The building is approximately 160 feet by 217 feet with brick masonry walls faced with a Rocklin California granite base and blue-gray sandstone upper stories. The interior has cast iron columns supporting wrought girders, said to be imported from Philadelphia. These in turn carry the floors on shallow brick arches "finished in cement". In the attic iron girders support the roof, most of which is of galvanized and corrugated iron and a small part of copper sheathed wood.

Interior The interior woodwork is mostly golden mahogany. The windows are fitted with interior iron shutters which fold open against the window reveals.

Site The building is located in an area of commercial San Francisco which is due for redevelopment. Such a building of the historic past could do much to add scale and permanence to the design of any urban development in this area of the city.

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